

# Proclamation

OF

## PAMFILO DE NARVAEZ.

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TO THE INHABITANTS OF THE COUNTRIES AND PROVINCES  
FROM RIO DE PALMAS TO THE CAPE OF FLORIDA, 1527.

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TRANSLATED FROM A COPY OF THE ORIGINAL IN THE ARCHIVES OF THE INDIES,  
SEVILLE, SPAIN.

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IN behalf of the Catholic Cæsarean Majesty  
of DON CARLOS, King of the Romans,  
and Emperor ever Augustus, and  
Doña JUANA, his mother, sovereigns of  
Leon and Castilla, defenders of the  
church, ever victors, never vanquished,  
and rulers of barbarous nations, I, PAMFILO DE NARVAEZ,  
his servant, messenger, and captain, notify and cause ye to  
know, in the best manner I can, that God, our Lord, one  
and eternal, created the heaven and the earth, and one man  
and one woman, of whom we and you and all men in the  
world have come, are descendants and the generation, as  
well will those be who shall come after us; but because of  
the infinity of offspring that followed in the five thousand

years, and more since the world was created, it has become necessary that some men should go in one direction, and others in another, dividing into many kingdoms and provinces, since in a single one they could not be sustained or kept.

All these nations God, our Lord, gave in charge to one person called St. PETER, that he might be master and superior over mankind, to be obeyed and be head of all the human race, wheresoever they might live, and be of whatever law, sect, or belief, giving him the whole world for his kingdom, lordship, and jurisdiction.

And he commanded him to place his seat in Rome, as a point most suited whence to rule the world ; so he likewise permitted him to have and place his seat on any part of the earth to judge and govern all people, Christians, Moors, Jews, Gentiles, and of whatever creed beside they might be. Him they call Papa, which means admirable, greatest father and preserver, since he is father and governor of all men.

This Saint PETER was obeyed and taken for King, Lord, and Superior of the universe by those who lived at that time, and so likewise have all the rest been held who to the Pontificate were afterwards elected ; and thus has it continued until now, and will continue to the end of all things.

One of the popes who succeeded him to that seat of dignity of which I spake, as Lord of the world, made a gift of these islands and main of the ocean sea to the said Emperor and Queen, and their successors, our Lords in these kingdoms, with all that is in them, as is contained in certain

writings that thereupon took place, which may be seen if you desire. Thus are their Highnesses King and Queen of these islands and continent, and nearly all where they have been proclaimed have received their majesties, obeyed and served, and do serve them, as subjects should, with good will and no resistance, and immediately without delay, directly as they were informed, obeying the religious men whom their Highnesses sent to preach to them, and teach our holy faith of their entire free will and pleasure, without reward or condition whatsoever, becoming Christians, which they are; and their Highnesses received them joyfully and benignly, ordering them to be treated as their subjects and vassals were, and you are held and obliged to act as likewise. Wherefore, as best as you can, I entreat and require you to understand this well which I have told you, taking the time for it that is just you should, to comprehend and reflect, and that you recognize the church as mistress and superior of the universe, and the high pontiff, called Papa, in its name, the King and Queen our masters, in their place as Lords Superiors and Sovereigns of these islands and the main, by virtue of said gift, and you consent and give opportunity that these fathers and religious men declare and preach to you as stated. If you shall do so, you will do well in what you are held and obliged; and their Majesties, and I, in their royal name, will receive you with love and charity, relinquishing in freedom your women, children, and estates, without service, that with them and yourselves you may do with perfect liberty all you wish and may deem well; you

shall not be required to become Christians except, when informed of the truth, you desire to be converted to our Holy Catholic faith, as nearly all the inhabitants of the other islands have done, and when his Highness will confer on you numerous privileges and instruction, with many favors.

If you do not this, and of malice you are dilatory, I protest to you, that, with the help of our Lord, I will enter with force, making war upon you from all directions and in every manner that I may be able, when I will subject you to obedience to the church and the yoke of their Majesties; and I will take the persons of yourselves, your wives, and your children to make slaves,\* sell and dispose of you, as their

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\* From the first discovery of the continent of America, the Spaniards commenced to carry off the natives to sell for slaves in the West India Islands. PONCE DE LEON, LUCAS VASQUEZ DE AYLLON, and PAMPHILO DE NARVAEZ, as well as others, continued this traffic for several centuries.

BARTHOLOMEW DE LAS CASAS, Bishop of *Chiapa*, in a curious memoir entitled "La Brevissima Relacion de la Destruccion de las Indias," which, by order of the Emperor CHARLES V., he transmitted in 1543 to the assembly of the prelates collected at *Valladolid*, Spain, to reform abuses in the New World and the West Indies, informs us that "Three merciless tyrants at different times invaded the provinces of Florida (referring to the above expeditions), all animated with the same spirit, and moved by the same designs. They all committed the same outrages throughout Florida. But God was pleased to punish them after a very signal manner, for they all came to a miserable end.

"These brutes would doubtless have committed yet more villainies, had not the just judgment of the Almighty shortened their days.

"When they came into Florida they found it plentifully stored with people who were wise and well disciplined both in civil affairs and in morals. They began to cast a terror through the country by I know not how many massacres; so that the poor Indians, who had never known any thing like it, were put into a great consternation.

"The Spaniards used them as beasts of burden to carry their arms, utensils,

Majesties shall think fit ; and I will take your goods, doing you all the evil and injury that I may be able ; as to vassals who do not obey, but reject their master, resist and deny

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and provisions. They put men and women, masters and servants, all to the sword without any respect to age, sex, or quality. They cut off their lips and noses, and sent them away in this condition to terrify the rest of the country. These cruelties hindered the success of the missions of our apostolic men in this country, who had no good reasons to produce to these poor wretches to excuse such barbarities as these. One may guess by these cruelties what love the Indians must have for the Catholics, and what confidence they can put in their promises. What idea they can have of God when he is described to them as infinitely good and merciful ? What can they think of His law, which they are told is so holy and just, when they see those who profess to observe it do not scruple to commit all kinds of crime ?

“ The Spaniards took away over a million of men from the coasts of these provinces and transported them into the islands of St. John and Hispaniola, where they perished in the mines, or by other hardships were made to suffer. It would produce compassion in the hardest hearts to see these coasts that were once so full of people now absolutely deserts.

“ As for the continent, it is of what I know certain that the Spaniards have ruined ten kingdoms there larger than all Spain by the commission of all sorts of barbarity and unheard-of cruelties. They have driven away or killed all the inhabitants, so that all these kingdoms are desolate to this day, and reduced to a most deplorable condition. We dare assert, without fear of contradiction, that in the space of these forty years in which the Spaniards exercised their intolerable cruelty in this new world, they unjustly put to death many millions of people, counting men, women, and children.

“ The gold and silver these people had in their possession was the motive that violently prompted the Europeans to persecute and destroy them. In a word, their avarice and ambition were arrived to an excess beyond imagination. The immense riches of the New World, the tractable, sweet, and good disposition of the Indians, which rendered a descent into their country easy to attempt, have occasioned all the ravage and spoil, all the horrid massacres and cruelties, which the Spaniards have caused them to suffer. They had so little regard for the salvation of their souls, that they would not trouble themselves so much as to speak of the Christian faith and sacrament to those numberless multitudes of men,

him; and I declare to you that the deaths and damages that arise therefrom will be your fault, and not that of his Majesty, nor mine, nor of these cavaliers who come with me.

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women, and children, whom they sacrificed to their ambition and tyranny, until, wearied out with repeated cruelties and massacres, they were compelled to arm themselves and repel force by force."